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ABSTRACT

Teacher warranty programs are one way that teacher preparation programs can provide follow-up support to their graduates and assurance of the quality of their graduates to employers and the general public. A survey of 105 teacher preparation institutions revealed that only 8 have implemented warranty programs, but their experience suggests that this approach can be implemented with minimal expenditures and maximum benefits. Wording of the warranties varied from institution to institution but in general they guaranteed the quality of teacher education graduates and provided individualized programs of assistance to beginning teachers performing unsatisfactorily. Warranties differed in coverage (both undergraduates and graduates or just undergraduates), term of warranty coverage, warranty assistance features, and method of determining the need for assistance. Types of assistance included one-to-one counseling, on-site consultation, advisement on teaching materials, tuition-free coursework, suggested readings, and others. Requests for assistance numbered less than five at seven of the eight programs, and no requests were received by the other program. Guidelines for implementing a warranty program are provided, focusing on who should be involved in program development, faculty acceptance of the ramifications of warranty programs, possible reluctance of subject matter departments to adopt a warranty, and other criteria. (JDD)

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# TEACHER WARRANTY PROGRAMS--INSURANCE OR ASSURANCE

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TEACHER WARRANTY PROGRAMS--INSURANCE OR ASSURANCE

ABSTRACT

Teacher warranty programs are one way that teacher preparation programs can provide follow-up support to its graduates and assurance of the quality of its graduates to employers and the general public. A survey of 161 teacher preparation institutions reveals that only a small number have put warranty programs into effect, but their experience suggests this approach can be implemented with minimal expenditures and maximum benefits. Guidelines for implementing a warranty program are provided.

-1994

# TEACHER WARRANTY PROGRAMS--INSURANCE OR ASSURANCE?

Much has been said over the years about the quality of teacher education graduates. In the last five to ten years, the criticism of teacher preparation seems to have accelerated and numerous reforms have been launched. Much of the emphasis has been placed on entrance requirements, monitoring of progress in programs, performance on nationally normed exit tests such as the National Teachers' Exam, and, more recently, the ability of teachers to meet national standards such as those set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Much less attention has been given to what happens to these teachers once they are employed. Few states now, of course, are without some form of mandated induction at the district level and usually these programs require some form of mentoring by experienced teachers within the district. Still, the track record for effective induction and support of beginning teachers is not always what it might or should be (Duke & Gates, 1990). And the attrition rate among beginning teachers has been high--up to 50% turn-over within the first five years of teaching (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987).

One of the potential weaknesses in many districts' induction programs is the absence of systematic involvement by universities charged with the preparation of teachers. Although some states, Kentucky, for example, have included university personnel on their induction teams, most have no direct provision for higher education involvement nor are they encouraged to do so even by state mandate. Pennsylvania, for instance, in its guidelines for

mandated induction programs acknowledges no direct role for higher education in the development, implementation or monitoring of a district's induction plan (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1993).

Well designed, fully funded and staffed induction programs for beginning teachers would seem to hold the most promise for assisting new teachers in making the transition from college studies to day-to-day classroom teaching in the widely varied teaching environments of this nation (Morey & Murphy, 1993). But the role of the teacher preparation institution should not be seen as ending at the time a diploma and/or initial certification are granted. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in its guidelines for accrediting teacher education programs (1990) cites as one of its requirements that the unit responsible for the preparation of teachers "...has developed arrangements with school districts in the area to provide assistance to its graduates who are first year teachers and/or who are beginning other professional roles as an extension of their professional education program" (Standard II.B[35], p. 50).

In efforts to respond to this NCATE standard as well as to their own sense that contact should be maintained with their graduates, teacher preparation institutions have conducted surveys of their graduates, provided newsletters highlighting trends and practices in education, offered occasional credit or non-credit workshops for local teachers, and, if possible, participated in occasional meetings on induction and induction support. Still not many

institutions appear to have well articulated, systematic follow-up support for their graduates. A few institutions, however, have stepped forward to assume some risk to themselves by adopting what are variously known as teacher guarantee or quality assurance programs. Although by no means a wide-spread phenomenon, these programs appear to have some merit and offer still another way for teacher preparation institutions to insure that a support system exists for their graduates should it be needed and that school districts who hire such an institution's graduates can count upon the institution assisting in necessary support activities should the graduate's teaching performance be in question.

To determine to what extent such warranty or quality assurance programs existed, 161 institutions belonging to the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU) were surveyed (See Appendix for survey). A return rate of 63% provided a reliable basis for forming some judgments regarding the wide-spread use of such programs. Of the 105 institutions responding to the survey, 8 had fully developed programs in operation while a 9th institution was in the process of implementation. The majority of these warranty programs have been in operation at least three years with 4 reporting operation for 6 to 9 years; only 1 program had less than 2 years experience. The institutions reporting warranty programs in operation were the following:

Eastern Washington University

University of North Texas

Fayetteville State University (North Carolina)

Sam Houston State University (Texas)

Jacksonville State University (Alabama)

University of Northern Colorado

Emporia State University (Kansas)

Western Illinois University

Institutional Characteristics

Two of these institutions had a total enrollment between 4,000-7,000 students, 2 between 7,000-10,000 and 4 had enrollments above 10,000. In terms of undergraduate enrollments in the colleges of education at these institutions, all but two had enrollments between 1,000-2,500 with one above 3,500 and one below 1,000. Three of the 8 institutions certify 100-300 students annually, while the remaining 5 certify above 400. All of the institutions require students to have at least a 2.50 grade point average for graduation but only 3 institutions reported that their students must pass the National Teachers Examination prior to certification. Five of the institutions were accredited by NCATE. Eight institutions offer the following certifications: elementary education, secondary education, special education; 4 offer, in addition, school librarian/media specialist, 3 also offer speech pathology and audiology, and 1 offers school nurse certification.

Warranty General Characteristics

Each of the basic warranties is spelled out in general terms, usually in the form of a certificate or a brochure. Wording of the basic warranties varies somewhat from institution to institution but, in general, the philosophy of the warranty along with general information about what is covered form the public document. Actual procedures for initiating requests, etc., are provided to the employing districts separately. The following sample from Fayetteville State University in North Carolina is typical:

EDUCATIONAL WARRANTY of FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

> Fayetteville State University(FSU) guarantees the quality of its teacher education graduates and their ability to make a positive contribution to the field of education. Effective Fall 1988, a beginning teacher certified by FSU, who is employed in North Carolina and is found to be performing unsatisfactorily, will be provided an individualized program of assistance by the School of Education. This service will be offered free of charge to the teacher and may include tuition-free coursework, on-site supervision and consultation. This warranty is also designed to strengthen the collaboration between FSU's School of Education and the schools in the state of North Carolina. FSU is committed to excellence in Teacher Education and is confident in the abilities of its graduates.

Typically the warranties cover only undergraduates although two programs covered graduates from their masters' programs. All but 1 program covers all its teacher education graduates and the exception reports that up to 75 percent of their graduates now have coverage. All 8 programs extend their coverage only to those graduates employed in-state but 3 program directors indicated that they would provide some service out-of-state if necessary although they did not advertise it. The majority of warranties (6) cover the first year of teaching, 2 will cover up to two years. All warranty programs indicate that coverage will not be provided for problems caused by assignment of graduates outside their certified fields or by those caused from excessive levels of preparations and/or duties assigned to teachers.

Warranty Assistance Features

Although institutions differed slightly in the kind of assistance they would provide, the majority indicated that among the services which could be provided were the following:

A. One-to-one counseling, either on site, via telephone or computer

B. Inservice workshops, credit or non-credit

C. On-site visitation, consultation, supervision

D. Analysis/advisement on teaching materials

C. Tuition-free coursework

D. Suggested readings and other resources

Assistance can be triggered by various individuals; several programs provide assistance if only the graduate contacts them while others request that notification come through the school's administrative channels, either via a principal or superintendent. In the latter cases, the graduate is required to agree to receive assistance before action will be taken. In general, though, program directors reported that if a problem surfaced, regardless of who initiated the request, they would attempt to respond in a timely and appropriate way. One program does provide specific conditions which must be met prior to assistance; these include that at least two evaluations have been conducted by the teacher's supervisor and two conferences between supervisor and teacher have occurred, the building principal must have requested the assistance, and the teacher must have agreed to release his/her evaluation reports to the university.

Requests for assistance have not been numerous. Seven of the eight programs report that they have had less than 5 requests since their programs were initiated, and one reported no requests. When requests have been made, they typically are for assistance with classroom management or organization, not for content-related issues. In the event that a request for assistance occurs, faculty generally are expected to provide the assistance in-load although program directors indicated that travel expenses would be covered. Only 1 of the 8 institutions reporting indicated that it had a collective bargaining agreement where such responsibilities might be considered as additional work

for additional pay. Program directors have found that the program has not called for the addition of staff nor the expenditure of extra budgetary funds.

Legal Issues

Granting warranties carries with it legal implications. An institution is, after all, guaranteeing that its graduates can perform at acceptable levels. Several of the institutions reported that their warranties were reviewed by university counsel and one program director reported that the university's lawyer was a member of the committee who originally drafted the warranty. All eight program directors reported that in the time their warranties have been in effect--most between 6-9 years--they have had no legal challenges, but they also suggest that an institution should not enter the warranty business unless they are quite secure in the knowledge that few students will need assistance. As one director said, "Good press that an institution receives for establishing a warranty can turn to bad press if very many people call on that institution to make good on its warranty."

Benefits from Warranties

None of the reporting institutions reported any disadvantages from having initiated their programs. All 8 institutions reported very favorable response to their warranty programs from the school districts, media, and general public. Some directors felt that it enhanced recruiting and all agreed that it provided

a form of accountability which was easily understood outside academia. Graduates from these warranty programs report feeling more comfortable in seeking assistance and express pride in a program which is willing to support them as they enter the profession.

But perhaps a more significant benefit resides within the programs themselves. Warranty programs require that faculty give the training necessary to produce qualified teachers. This means that faculty need to engage in continuing professional development, and need to consider the ramifications of the warranty. As one director reported,

> Some faculty recognized that their grading practices might be too lax and that they needed to ensure that students who receive passing grades in their courses really were proficient (the possibility that they might have to visit their students and teach them what they hadn't learned while in class and that this could build a negative reputation for them might have had something to do in upgrading their standards). Some faculty also began to look more closely at the problems experienced teachers were encountering and how they were handling them; these were incorporated into the teacher preparation courses.

Some Conclusions

If this sampling is any indication, warranty programs are not wide-spread among teacher preparation institutions. However, from the reports of those

who have tried them, little risk appears to be involved. Once an institution is convinced it has a quality product, why not put its seal of approval on the graduate and offer to stand behind that individual as he or she enters the teaching profession. Although warranty programs in and of themselves will not solve all of the attrition problems, coupled with vigorous involvement in induction programs and other staff development activities, they could provide additional assurance to the public, to graduates, and to employers that the institution is sincerely committed to providing the best kind of support network it can for its product.

For those who might consider developing a teacher warranty program, the following guidelines may be of some use.

1. All the players must engage in discussions about the program--this means inclusion of employers, students, faculty, and legal counsel.
2. Faculty must explore the ramifications of adopting warranties in terms of performance expectations, willingness to travel into the field to assist teachers who need help, and availability of funding for travel.
3. Subject matter departments, especially in secondary education, may be reluctant to adopt a warranty (although all but one institution in this study indicated that secondary education was covered). Warranties can be handled solely through Education departments but may need to focus only on pedagogy as a result.

4. Guidelines for initiating requests for assistance must be simple and provide access for both graduate and employer.
5. Warranty programs should not engage in evaluation of beginning teachers; to do otherwise would destroy the benefits of assistance.
6. Warranties should be publicized widely and should be mentioned often in recruitment/retention materials as well as promoted in classes; special emphasis upon the benefits of the warranty should occur during the student teaching/internship experience.
7. Periodic follow-up with employers and graduates to determine the effectiveness of the warranty should occur and be a regular part of overall program evaluation.

Teacher warranties do not insure total success for all graduates but they provide an assurance that a program has taken a hard look at itself, has set performance standards which can be measured, and has confidence that its graduates will represent the institution and the teaching profession well.

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Morey, A.I. and Murphy, D.S. (Eds.). (1990). Designing programs for new teachers:The California experience. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

Pennsylvania Department of Education. (1993). Induction and professional development guidelines. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

TEACHER WARRANTY SURVEY

Name of Institution:_____
Name of Person Completing Survey:_____
Position:_____
Mailing Address:_____
_____ zip _____
Tel. No._____

Directions: Please respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate letter.

1. What is the approximate enrollment of your university?
   A. below 4,000 B. 4,000-7,000 C. 7,000-10,000 D. above 10,000

2. What is the approximate undergraduate enrollment of your College of Education?
   A. below 1,000 B. 1,000-2,500 C. 2,500-3,500 D. above 3,500

3. How many full-time faculty are in your College?
   A. below 50 B. 50-100 C. 100-150 D. above 150

4. How many teacher education students do you certify annually?
   A. below 100 B. 100-300 C. 300-400 D. above 400

5. What is the required QPA for graduation from the Teacher Education Program?
   A. 2.0 B. 2.5 C. 2.75 D. 3.0 or above

6. Are students required to pass the NTE prior to certification?
   A. yes B. no

7. Do you require any other competency tests prior to certification?
   A. yes B. no

8. Is your program NCATE accredited?
   A. yes B. no

9. Do you have a teacher warranty or quality assurance program for your graduates?
   A. yes B. no (note: if you answer no to this question, please stop here and return the survey in the stamped envelope; if you answered yes, please continue).

10. Do you extend your warranty to cover students in master's and/or doctoral programs?
    A. yes B. no

11. Do you geographically restrict your teacher warranty program?
    A. yes B. no

12. If you geographically restrict the warranty, what are the limitations?
A. 50-100 mile radius of university B. 200-500 mile radius C. must be employed in state

13. For how long a period does your warranty extend?
A. first year of employment B. first two years of employment C. indefinite

14. How long has your warranty program been in effect?
A. less than 2 years B. 3-5 years C. 6-8 years D. 9 or more years

15. Are all teacher education graduates covered by the program?
A. yes B. no

16. In the time your program has been in effect, how many requests for assistance have you had?
A. less than 5 B. 6-10 C. 11-15 D. 16 or more

17. Who is responsible for initiating a request for assistance?
A. graduate B. principal C. superintendent D. school district

18. Have you ever had a legal challenge to your warranty program?
A. yes B. no

19. How are faculty assigned to responding to warranty requests for assistance?
A. in-load responsibility B. released time C. extra pay D. other

20. Does your university operate under a collective bargaining agreement?
A. yes B. no

Extended Answer

We would appreciate your providing specific information related to the following questions. Feel free to use additional space if necessary.

1. In which of the following programs do your students obtain certification?
(check as many as apply)
___Elementary Education
___Secondary Education
___Special Education
___Speech Pathology and Audiology
___School Librarian/media specialist
___School Nurse

1. What has been the overall response from employers to your warranty program? from your graduates?

2. To what extent have you had to provide additional staff or budgetary funds to cover the warranty program?

3. What kind of assistance have you had to offer to "problem cases" under your warranty program? What pattern(s), if any, have you noticed in either the certification areas from which requests come or from employers?

4. What are the specific conditions under which you will honor your warranty? (Attach a description of your program if available)

5. What do you feel have been the benefits for your college and university since you adopted the warranty program? What, if any, have been the disadvantages?

6. How have you dealt with legal issues related to a warranty program?

7. What advice would you offer a College of Education which is considering offering a teacher warranty for its graduates?

A Final Note: We would appreciate receiving any materials you can share with us regarding your teacher warranty program or similar efforts. Thank you very much for providing us with this information. If you wish to obtain copies of the results of this survey, please indicate here___.